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SUBJECT: KEY TOPICS FOR EU FMS' MEETING AND SUMMIT, JUNE 14 AND JUNE 17-18

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SUMMARY

1. The headline issues for the June 14 EU FMs' meeting and the June 17-18 EU Summit will be the final round of Constitutional Treaty negotiations and the nomination of the next generation of key EU leaders (Commission President, CFSP High Rep). But a substantial list of other topics will also be on the meeting agendas. Likely topics include Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, WMD, the EU Arms Agency, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia (and possibly other Balkan topics such as UNMIK and Serb elections), Russia, the European Neighborhood Initiative, Sudan, Burma and Nepal. The Irish are even pondering a "bland" reference to Transatlantic relations. While few of these topics will actually receive much substantive debate at ministerial or summit level, the Irish Presidency is at work on draft Conclusions for nearly all of these topics. END SUMMARY

A BIG WEEK FOR THE EU

2. (SBU) The week of June 14th will be the culmination of the Irish EU Presidency, with Foreign Ministers meeting in Luxembourg on June 14 for a General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting, and gathering again with EU Heads of State and Government for the EU Summit meeting in Brussels on June 17-18. The headline issues for both meetings, and -- at least within the EU -- the measure of whether the Irish Presidency has been a success, will be if the EU can successfully conclude its negotiations on a new Constitutional Treaty and who they pick as the next European Commission President and the next High Rep for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). We believe the chances are better than even that the Irish will be able to reach an agreement on the Constitutional Treaty, although the specific details of how some issues such as voting formulas will come out are harder to predict. But in any case, it is unlikely that significant changes will occur in policy areas of direct interest to the US such as the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). The possibility that CFSP could in some circumstances be a matter of Qualified Majority Vote (QMV) rather than unanimity remains an agenda item, but we doubt it would be agreed. The Commission President race, however, remains highly unpredictable. The fact that there are three rumored "front runners" (Belgian PM Verhofstadt, Luxembourg PM Juncker and Portuguese Commissioner Vitorino) from among a very long list of possibilities means that in reality there is no front runner and "none of the above" is as good a bet as any. By contrast, it is almost guaranteed that Javier Solana will be renominated as CFSP High Rep, unless he emerges as a last-minute compromise candidate for Commission President.

3. (SBU) While the above issues will be getting almost all the attention during the big week, the GAERC and Summit meetings will also have long agendas of other items, few of which will get much substantive discussion by FMs or Heads, but most of which will be discussed in the official Conclusions of the meetings.

MIDDLE EAST, MEPP, IRAQ

4. (C) The Commission is due to send to the EU Member States on June 9 a document outlining a "Medium Term Strategy" for Iraq (septel). FMs and Heads will "welcome, review and possibly endorse" this strategy, an Irish source told us. A similar approach is possible for an anticipated "EU Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean and Middle East Regions." Finally the Summit, and possibly the GAERC as well, will issue Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, but our sources indicate there is unlikely to be much substance beyond what was discussed at the last Quartet meeting and familiar statements underlining the need to implement the road map. The EU on June 14 will also be holding its inaugural Association Council meeting with Egypt, subsequent to the recent signing of an EU-Egypt Association Agreement.

IRAN (POSSIBLY)

15. (C) Our Irish source told us that the EU will be primed to respond to the most recent IAEA report and any implications of it for Iran's relationship with the EU, and will almost feel compelled to do so as earlier GAERC's have committed the EU FMs to actively follow the issue. Our source confessed to a secret hope, however, that the IAEA report, which is scheduled to be presented to the IAEA Board of Governors on June 14, might come out so late that the EU will not have to offer any substantive response, since the crowded agendas of the meetings will make any serious discussion of the issue difficult.

AFGHANISTAN

16. (C) EU FMs at the GAERC are to discuss what EU role might be possible in support of the upcoming elections. The Commission, which usually organizes such activities for the EU, has expressed concerns about the security situation and burgeoning drug trade.

WMD, COUNTER TERRORISM, AND OTHER JHA MATTERS

17. (C) The GAERC should review the implementation of the EU's WMD strategy and adopt a declaration on criminal sanctions on WMD related material. The Summit is also likely to reiterate EU support for the PSI statement of interdiction principles. The EU Summit Conclusions should include a "substantial section" on counter terrorism efforts, based on the work of the EU's new "anti-terror czar" Gijs de Vries. The Summit is also set to consider a Commission report (released on June 2) on how the EU is doing on coordination and implementation of other justice and home affairs (JHA) projects such as law enforcement cooperation and immigration policies. This report comes five years after the 1999 EU Summit in Tampere, Finland set a lengthy agenda for such work.

ESDP

18. (C/NF) The meetings will conduct a traditional "end of term" review of progress and activities in developing ESDP. Among possible items for decision would be approval to move ahead on the "battle groups" proposal. The Irish also remain hopeful that the GAERC will approve a Joint Action on establishment of the new EU Arms Agency. The Agency has been a repeated subject of discussion just below the level of the Political and Security Committee as Member States such as the British and Dutch seek to ensure that agreed procedures maintain some constraints over what the Agency can do, particularly by ensuring that small groups cannot use the agency to promote projects unless a majority of Member States support the idea (even if they do not all choose to participate).

ENLARGEMENT: CROATIA, ROMANIA, BULGARIA, BUT LITTLE ON TURKEY

19. (C) The next round(s) of EU enlargement will also figure on the week's agendas. The Irish sound confident they will be able to close all of the remaining negotiating chapters for Bulgaria's accession. They also expect to conclude some additional chapters with Romania, although the Irish focus has been on Bulgaria to "allow the Dutch to focus on just one country." Croatia, another Irish source told us, is "virtually guaranteed" to be named an official candidate for EU membership at the Summit. But it is still a pending question whether the EU will fix a date for beginning accession negotiations with Croatia. According to our Irish contact, this has nothing to do with remaining question marks over Croatia's ICTY cooperation, but are only related to France's "enlargement fatigue" and the worries of several Member States about setting a precedent for the December decision on Turkey. The June Summit is expected to make at most cursory mention of Turkey in its Conclusions.

RUSSIA AND EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

110. (SBU) The Summit will likely include positive language about developments in EU-Russia relations over the past six months. The Irish Presidency appears keen to highlight what they see as one of their successes in "taking a clearer look at identifying what we wanted out of the relationship and creating a proper structure for handling it." They will likely look to highlight the results of the recent EU-Russia Summit. The Summit should also approve the Commission's proposals for the European Neighborhood Initiative and confirm that Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are potential participants within the scope of the project, with Georgia being the initial candidate for further interaction.

SUDAN

11. (SBU) The Summit is likely to issue language addressing the Sudan crisis, according to one of our Irish sources, but it was unclear what precisely the EU would include. One possibility could be an offer of support for EU monitors for a cease-fire in the country, but that is not yet decided. (NOTE: Members of the EU Military Staff have reacted very negatively to the prospect of being asked to undertake any sort of ESDP mission in Sudan at a time when they are fully engaged in Bosnia planning.)

BURMA/ASEM AND NEPAL

12. (C) The EU continues to struggle with how to respond to the pending enlargement of ASEAN, including Burma as a member. The GAERC should review the EU's approach to the problem, including the question of whether the EU would show up for a meeting where the Burmese regime attends (an EU-ASEM Summit is scheduled for Hanoi in October, with lower level meetings beginning under the Dutch presidency in July). An Irish envoy (John Campbell) has been touring the region, but reportedly heard little flexibility from ASEAN countries. The EU FMs will likely confirm the EU's position that Rangoon should release Aung San Suu Kyi, allow greater political participation of her party, and improve the procedures for the National Conference. At British request, the GAERC is also set to discuss the current situation in Nepal.

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

13. (C/NF) Based on the principle, according to our Irish contact, that "if we have mentioned all these other places in the world, someone might ask us why we did not mention the U.S." the EU Summit's Conclusions will likely include a "bland" paragraph on transatlantic relations, that would do little more than note the EU looked forward to the US-EU Summit the following week. (COMMENT: As ever with EU Conclusions, the fact that a topic is simply introduced leaves open the possibility that one Member State or another will try to introduce additional language, but we wouldn't expect any such ideas to gain consensus. END COMMENT.)

BALKANS

14. (C) Beyond the discussion (see para 9) on Croatia's EU application, the Balkans may not receive any ministerial level discussion. GAERC Conclusions are likely, however, that will note Solana's recent visit to Kosovo, and perhaps the resignation of UNMIK SRS Holkeri, as well as the previous weekend's presidential elections in Serbia.

OTHER TOPICS

15. (SBU) The meetings will also include standard "end of term reviews" of EU action on conflict prevention; implementation of the European Security Strategy in the four chosen areas (counter terrorism, Bosnia, "effective multilateralism" and the Middle East); and progress on the EU's Lisbon agenda for economic reform. Finally, the EU Summit should establish a calendar for reaching agreement on the EU's 2007-2013 "financial perspective" or budget envelope. This is set to become the EU's next big internal debate.

SCHNABEL